

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 6, 7 and 11, as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism comprising:

 a first holding member that holds a first optical element;

 a second holding member that holds a second optical element;

 a plurality of coupling members that couple said first holding member and said second holding member so as to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied during a coupling operation;

 a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least during the coupling operation so as to permit alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element during the coupling operation; and

 a ~~deformation restricting~~ member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member that prevents deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation,

wherein the first holding member includes a plurality of stud portions and the member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member includes a plurality of hole portions which receive the plurality of stud portions of the first holding member to prevent the deformation of the first holding member while

relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation.

2. (Previously Presented) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, wherein each coupling member is a screw that couples said first holding member and said second holding member by press contact.

3. (Previously Presented) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 2, wherein each urging member is a deformable washer that generates an elastic force, and through which a shaft of said screw pierces.

Claims 4 and 5 (Cancelled).

6. (Currently Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, wherein each urging member is disposed between a coupling member and said ~~deformation restricting~~ member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member.

7. (Currently Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, ~~further comprising wherein the member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member a friction preventing member, disposed between each coupling member and said second holding member, that~~

also prevents generation of a frictional force between said coupling member and said second holding member during the coupling operation.

8. (Previously Presented) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein movement of said friction preventing member within a plane of varying the relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member is restricted.

Claim 9 (Cancelled).

10. (Previously Presented) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein each urging member is disposed between a coupling member and said friction preventing member.

11. (Currently Amended) An optical apparatus comprising:
an apparatus body; and
an optical-element holding mechanism including:
a first holding member that holds a first optical element;
a second holding member that holds a second optical element;
a plurality of coupling members that couple said first holding member and said second holding member so as to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied during a coupling operation;

a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least during the coupling operation so as to permit alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element during the coupling operation; and

a ~~deformation restricting~~ member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member that prevents deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation,

wherein the first holding member includes a plurality of stud portions and the member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member includes a plurality of hole portions which receive the plurality of stud portions of the first holding member to prevent the deformation of the first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation.

Claims 12 to 18 (Cancelled).

19. (Previously Presented) An optical-element holding mechanism comprising:

a first holding member that holds a first optical element;
a second holding member that holds a second optical element;

a plurality of coupling members that couple said first holding member and said second holding member so as to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied during a coupling operation;

a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least during the coupling operation so as to permit alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element during the coupling operation; and

a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member that restricts deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation;

wherein said deformation restricting member includes a plurality of first through hole portions for receiving said plurality of coupling members;

wherein said first holding member includes an extended portion extending in the direction of the optical axis of said first optical element, said extended portion including a plurality of abutting faces and a plurality of receiving portions for receiving the plurality of coupling members; and

wherein said second holding member includes a plurality of flanges extending in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis, each flange abutting against one of said plurality of abutting faces of said first holding member, each flange including a second through hole portion for receiving a respective one of said plurality of coupling members.

20. (Previously Presented) An optical apparatus comprising:

an apparatus body; and

an optical-element holding mechanism including:

 a first holding member that holds a first optical element;

 a second holding member that holds a second optical element;

 a plurality of coupling members that couple said first holding member and said second holding member so as to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied during a coupling operation;

 a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least during the coupling operation so as to permit alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element during the coupling operation; and

 a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member that restricts deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation;

 wherein said deformation restricting member includes a plurality of first through hole portions for receiving said plurality of coupling members;

 wherein said first holding member includes an extended portion extending in the direction of the optical axis of said first optical element, said extended portion including a plurality of abutting faces and a plurality of receiving portions for receiving the plurality of coupling members; and

wherein said second holding member includes a plurality of flanges extending in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis, each flange abutting against one of said plurality of abutting faces of said first holding member, each flange including a second through hole portion for receiving a respective one of said plurality of coupling members.

Claims 21 and 22 (Cancelled).